



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

Colorado Application #1600CO-1



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	50	50	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4	4	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	39	39	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	7	7	

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Articulating Comprehensive, Coherent Reform Agenda. Colorado has set forth an impressive reform agenda which includes a clear overarching goal consistent with the intent of the RttT competition. The key features of this reform agenda are: 1. Ensuring all students have access to high quality public school choice 2. Developing educator capacity 3. Providing incentives for effectiveness, knowledge capture and sharing best practices 4. Creating opportunities for innovation in school organization, support models, educator evaluations and turn-around models. The state's reform plan embodies a results oriented approach and presents a thoughtful, comprehensive and coherent strategy which is strongly aligned to the four education areas described in the ARRA. Included in the plan is ambitious set of performance targets for improving student outcomes. The state's RttT proposal builds on several existing state reform efforts: The Colorado State Board of Education Strategic Plan, The Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (enacted by the state legislature in 2008), Longitudinal Assessment Bill (2009), Educational Accountability Act of 2009, Colorado Growth Model (2008), and a pilot project testing different approaches to closing achievement gaps.

Securing LEA Commitment. Colorado's leadership has put forth an aggressive public engagement and outreach process in support of its RttT application. This statewide process has generated both interest and enthusiasm from a broad range of stakeholders including educators, policymakers, politicians, business representatives, parents, students and community leaders. Local education agencies in Colorado have expressed a strong endorsement of the state's educational reform agenda presented in its Race to the Top application as evidenced by the fact that 134 out of 180 of Colorado's local school districts have agreed to participate. Endorsement signatures from superintendents and respective school board chairs secured from 100% of the participating local districts serves as evidence of support at the local level. LEAs have committed to implementing all 16 portions of the applicable Plan Criteria presented in the Preliminary Scope of Work. The Colorado Memorandum of Agreement is substantially identical to the model framework included in the RttT application packet. An additional Section VII provides assurances relative to protections in existing collective bargaining agreements and federal and state statutes. Of the 88 participating LEAs with collective bargaining agreements, 41% of the local teachers' associations have signed on to the RttT application. Documentation also includes a letter of support from the Colorado Education Association pledging active participation in the state's proposed reform effort. A letter of support is included in the Colorado application from the League of Charter Schools. More specific clarification and documentation pertaining to the referenced participation and support of The Charter School Institute along with 94% of the State's charter schools should be provided. Translating LEA Participation into Statewide Impact. The number LEAs committed to the Colorado RttT reform agenda represent 94 % of the state's K-12 student enrollment. Ninety two percent of the schools that have been identified as low performing are in the participating LEAs. Participating LEAs represent diversity across several aspects including geography (large

metropolitan centers, as well as, rural communities); high performing and consistently low performing LEAs, and including districts recognized as national leaders in education. Additionally, the largest numbers and high percentages of low income students, English Language Learners and students with disabilities are enrolled in the participating LEAs. The state has projected an ambitious set of achievement goals in accordance with the specified categories requested:

- By 2020, increasing overall student achievement in math from 54.5 per cent to 85 per cent and reading as reported by NAEP and as reported by the California Growth Model
- By 2020, increasing high school graduation rates from 73.9 percent to 90 per cent for all students
- Decreasing achievement gaps among students to 10 percentage points or less
- By 2013-14, increasing college enrollment by students graduating from high schools in the bottom quartile

The timeframe for this expected progress as presented in Exhibit VI.A (1)iii-1 is projected over a 10 year period, 2010-2020. In order to fully evaluate the likely impact of RttT investment in the state's reform agenda, additional information is needed which provides more specific benchmarks and progress indicators. While it should be expected that a reasonable amount of time and effort will be required to achieve such substantial improvement for all of Colorado's diverse student population, more specific growth projections are needed which are aligned with the RttT 4 year budget and investment framework—2010-2011 to 2013-2014. The state should also define more clearly the use of terminology such as student-groups, sub-groups, low-income consistent with NAEP categories of reporting. For example, the achievement target data should be presented and broken down by:

- Low income breakdowns consistent with NAEP reporting categories
- Minority targets broken down into projections for specific racial/ethnic groups, e.g. Black, Whites, Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders
- Improvement projections targeted for English Language Learners and student with disabilities.

Finally, the plan should more effectively address how the RttT investments will target the student achievement gaps showing the greatest need, e.g. under representation of women and girls in math and science.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans

(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement

(ii) Using broad stakeholder support

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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Ensuring the Capacity to Implement. The application addresses the 5 criteria in this section including the formation of implementation teams, constructive and intervention support for LEAs, effective and efficient operations and processes, and use of RttT grant funds. The most daunting task facing Colorado if this grant is awarded, will be to ensure the effective plan elements of the RttT plan will be sustained after the RttT funds have been exhausted. To this end, the state should assign clear responsibility for this task, provide a more detailed analysis or plan to develop one during the first year of implementation which would address both the expectations for program completions, program continuations and specific resource needs after the end of the grant period. Communication strategies and activities should include a broad range of human capital resources and stakeholders ranging from high level policy makers, business representatives but also participation from the grassroots level, e.g. community members, students and parents Using Broad Stakeholder Support. The public outreach process used by the state to involve a broad cross section of stakeholders in generating support for its RttT application is commendable. The application indicates a large number (650 as of November 2009) of diverse individuals and organizations have been included but does not provide details regarding the full scope of the outreach process, e.g. specific components, overall total of participants, numbers of meetings, frequency of interactions, etc. The application cites endorsement from the state teachers' association along with a letter committing support of the association to the plan. The applicant, however, does not effectively address the 59% of the local unions who would not commit to the RttT plan, the underlying reasons for their unwillingness to sign on and how the state intends to address these issues going forward. Assurances should be provided that diverse populations referenced in "other critical stakeholders" category, has been involved, e.g. civil rights leaders, tribal schools, parent student and community organizations, colleges and universities. The application does not effectively address how specific use of the various stakeholders will be made throughout plan implementation.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps

	30	13	13
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	8	8

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Making Progress in Each Reform Area. Notable among the state's accomplishments in the four RtT reform areas are: • Development and revisions of competency based Model Content Standards and aligned assessments • Implementation of a state system of accountability before NCLB • Creation of the nation's first 5th year degree dual degree program • Establishment of a longitudinal data system • The Colorado Growth Model Legislation • Initiation of a pilot model mastery-based progress and multiple high quality pathways system • Innovations in improving teacher and school leader effectiveness • Enactment of the Educational Accountability Act of 2009 which provides a clear accountability framework and authority for intervention if needed based on data provided by the CO Growth Model • One of 7 states chosen by Mass Insight to develop a comprehensive state strategy aimed at improving underperforming schools • Initiation of a pilot program in collaboration with 7 LEAs focused on identifying best practices most effective in closing achievement gaps in schools. The application presented by Colorado will build on an exceptionally strong track record of educational reform and a decade of experience in working on cutting edge innovations. In many areas, key components of state's education reform have been embraced by other states and received national recognition. It is important to note the efforts the state has put forth following a continuous improvement process to evaluate and refine its work at critical benchmarks thus ensuring what is being produced meets high quality standards of effectiveness and impact. Additionally, both the state and its LEAs have been quite skillful in leveraging a variety of federal, state and private to support its reform agenda.

Improving Student Outcomes. There has been variation in student achievement across grade levels and subjects. Colorado students have made significant gains in math while remaining relatively steady in reading. In each subject area students have outperformed the national average based on NAEP. Highlights of the data and information cited in the plan include: Mathematics: • NAEP 2003-2009: percentage of 4th graders scoring proficient and above increased from 35-45%; 8th graders increase was 32-40% • Scores on the state assessments 2003-2009: overall student growth—42-54%. • Subgroups: At 4th grade, each of the minority and low income student subgroups made progress on NAEP. Three out of 4 ethnic subgroups bettered proficiency levels by 10% or more. In 8th grade, NAEP scores for all minority and low income subgroups increased. Scores on the math portion of the state assessment increased for all ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Colorado indicates that it's past efforts focused on standards and alignment have been the primary contributors to the success in student achievement in math. Reading: • NAEP scores during the period 2003-2007 have remained relatively stable while out performing the national average: The percentage of 4th graders scoring proficient and above increased from 35-36%. Scores for 8th graders remained flat for this period. In 2007, thirty four percent of Colorado's 8th graders were proficient and above in reading. • Scores on the state assessments 2003-2009: The overall percentage of students scoring proficient and above increased from 66%-68% • Subgroups 2003-2009: On the state assessments, scores were more significant for subgroups than the overall student population, e.g. Hispanic students reading scores rose from 41% proficiency to 47%, ELL students reading proficiency improved from 29 to 39%.

Achievement Gaps: • Gaps in math have remained steady both on NAEP and state assessments • Achievement gaps in reading related to NAEP remain problematic. Colorado attributes the 3 year Closing the Achievement Gap pilot program as one of the influential factors contributing to the progress made by low economic and minority subgroups. As a result of changing definitions within the state over the last several years, the application does not address trend data for high school graduates over the period 2003 - 2009. The 2009 graduation rate has been calculated at 75% which is above the national average. The state also cites growth trends (3-4 % over a one year period) in two of its large urban centers as indicative of progress in this area. An explanation is needed to clarify the discrepancies between the numbers presented in the application narrative and Exhibit VI.A(3) related to NAEP achievement in reading and math. Descriptions and analysis of the achievement data should be presented by comparable categories in order to make appropriate judgments about the state's progress by subjects, grade levels, student subgroups and time frames. Tables and graphs for both NAEP and the state assessments should be included as noted in

the evidence required for (A)(3)(ii). Further elaboration is also needed pursuant to the requirements cited in (A)(3)(ii).."explain the connections between the data and actions that have contributed to it". Deep and thoughtful data analysis should be tied in significant ways to the RtT reform agenda in order to ensure that proposed strategies and activities are aligned with specific program and student achievement outcomes.

Total	125	88	88
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20	20	

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Participating in a Consortium Developing High Quality Standards. Colorado's application includes adequate documentation that it meets the specified criterion under this section. The state has executed a MOU demonstrating its commitment to jointly develop and adopt a common set of core standards. Forty eight states and 3 territories have joined the Common Core Standards Initiative sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governor's Association (CCSSO/NGA). A copy of the MOU, a list of participating states and territories and a copy of draft standards dated September 2009 are included in the application appendices. The Common Core Standards will be internationally benchmarked. To ensure that the standards prepare students to be globally competitive, the development team used a number of sources. In addition, the development team looked to the standards of a number of individual countries and provinces to inform the content, structure and language of the standards. Independent of the Consortium's initiative, Colorado has served as a leader in the development of world-class standards. During its 2007-2009 standards revision process, the state was assisted by many of the national and standards assessment experts. As part of this revision process, subject matter content committees were provided with results of a comparison between the state's existing standards and those of high achieving countries such as Singapore and Finland. Adopting Standards. Description of a plan for Colorado State Board adoption of Common Core Standards consistent with the RtT required time frame and the state's legal process has been provided. In preparation for the adoption of the CCSSO/NGA standards, Colorado contracted with WestED to conduct a formal alignment study of the CO P-12 Academic standards created within the state against the drafts of the Common Core document. Completion of the alignment study will allow the Colorado State Board of Education to take action by the August 2, 2010.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	7	7
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Colorado's application includes documentation pertaining to the specified criterion under this section. The state has executed a MOU demonstrating its commitment to jointly develop a battery of common high quality assessments that align with the Common Core Standards as part of a state consortium comprised of 12 states. This number is substantially less than the significant number required to earn high points for this criterion. A copy of the MOU along with a list of participating states are included in the application appendices.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The application describes a number of major initiatives and activities that will be undertaken both at the state and local levels to move the state's adopted content standards and aligned assessments into implementation across the state. The plan falls short in its presentation of a comprehensive and coherent strategy which is necessary to ensure deep and meaningful impact. In particular, attention should be given to the following:

- Plan organization and descriptions of the components included in this section which clarify the distinctions and relationships between initiatives, goals, activities and performance measures
- Expansion of performance measures to cover all aspects of the plan components
- Alignment of performance measures to the referenced goals and activities including proposed intensive support directed to LEAs with the highest concentrations of low achieving schools
- Procedures for collecting data related to the proposed outcomes at specified benchmarks and tied to the overall evaluation of the state's plan.

Total

70

57

57

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18	18	

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Satisfactory documentation is provided that Colorado has a robust statewide longitudinal data system which aligns currently with 9 of the 12 elements of the America Competes Act. Of these nine existing components:

- 2 have been fully completed
- 1 component is in process of development
- 7 components are in place but undergoing improvement.

The state is actively planning for the implementation of the 2 final elements: Communicating with higher education data systems and providing information regarding student transition from secondary school to post-secondary education

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data

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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Colorado will address this criteria essentially by building on and enhancing the state's previous efforts related to SchoolView, a common portal utilized by the state to house data visualizations across a wide spectrum factors related to effective processes tied to student achievement. SchoolView's current data visualizations include the high regarded Growth Model. RtT enhancements will include the integration of third party instructional improvement systems. Through this expansion additional access to information will be available on school readiness, postsecondary readiness and attainment, school improvement strategies, educator effectiveness, and return on investment as well as several other data points. A strong feature of the application is the recognition of the need for stimulating motivation and the capability. To this end Colorado has included plans for Making use of School View accompanied by systematic training, as well as, ensuring access to high speed broadband connectivity. The state is hopeful that it will garner close to 17 million from USED in response to its SLDS grant submission. If such funds are awarded to Colorado this would be a significant contribution to the RtT overall plan. Additional information is needed to understand how failure to receive SLDS funding, would result in specific fiscal and program implications.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction

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(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Colorado's intent is to implement a statewide instructional improvement system by utilizing and enhancing its SchoolView Platform. Data housed on SchoolView will allow instructional, administrative staff, students and others to have a range of data easily accessible for decision making leading to instructional and student achievement improvement. It will be important to ensure there is ongoing feedback provided in order to generate knowledge capture and best practices that can applied to future users. Professional development for teachers, principals and other administrators on the use of data for continuous instructional improvement

is a major feature of the Colorado application. The state will launch a multi-faceted integrated training and change management strategy which will feature both face to face and digital learning experiences. An extensive array of professional development providers will be used to implement this component including: Content Collaboratives, Regional Learning Communities, Technology Leads, change agents, a Change Management and Communications Coordinator, CDE personnel, higher education staff and the Center for Teaching and Learning. A concern arises in reviewing the application about whether sufficient attention has been given to building adequate oversight, leadership, coordination and managerial personnel to ensure effective delivery of the high quality professional development that is being proposed. Researchers will continue to have access to Colorado Growth Model data for the state and or individuals schools and LEAs. The improvements and expansions planned for School View will provide researchers with additional information. The Colorado Educational Research Council (CERC) is expected to serve as the major conduit for the flow of data to researchers. Seed money for the Consortium is expected to come from funding allocated by the Colorado RtT initiative. Exhibit VI.A (2) i-2 describes the Consortium's plans for collecting, disseminating and facilitating the use of data by policy makers and practitioners. Assurances should be put in place such that access to data through CERC is both timely and open to a wide group of potential users. CERC's scope of work should be revised to include a more explicit evaluation process to assess CERC's contribution to improvement processes and student performance with particular reference to different types of students (e.g. students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students whose achievement is well below or above grade level). While the application outlines Performance Measures aligned to most of the plan activities presented in this section, a measure aligned specifically to the work of the Consortium and the overall RtT evaluation is not provided but would be useful. Further, the application gives considerable attention to role of LEAs as recipients of services through the various RtT initiatives. Additional documentation should be provided to indicate how the criteria requirement for LEA collaboration in the development and implementation of a high quality plan to use data for instructional improvement will be addressed.

Total

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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	15	15	

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Colorado has authorized through several legislative enactments, an array of alternate licensure routes for teachers and principals. Details pertaining to these programs are outlined in the application narrative and supporting exhibits. Current state law, provides that school districts, BOCES, charter or independent schools, institutions of higher education, non profit organizations and any combination of these entities may apply and become a designated agency and offer a one or 2 year alternative teacher licensure program. These pathways conform to the four characteristics defined in the application notice. Any LEA offering a principal licensure program may work with a governmental, non-profit or for profit entity in design and program implementation. As of fall 2009, 42 entities had been approved to act as designated agencies to offer alternative teacher preparation programs along with 9 entities approved to offer principal preparation programs. A list of agencies offering alternative preparation programs is included in Exhibit VI.D (1) ii-1. The data reported in the application indicates that while alternative pathways are available the number of actual completers is relatively low, i.e. 793 of the 5,768 teachers that were licensed in Colorado completed and alternative program, 7 out of 741 principals completed alternative programs. In 2009 the state conducted a survey focused on shortages in the areas of special education. The state also works with local districts and BOCES along with alternative program preparation providers to design alternative routes to fill identified shortage areas. Aside from the special education referenced survey, the application does not adequately address how the state monitors or evaluates all areas of need related to critical educator shortages. Neither

the dependency on emergency authorizations as a primary data source nor the state's work with BOCES are judged to be sufficiently assertive actions as a response to criterion (D)(1)iii.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	53	53
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3	3
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12	12
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	28	28

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Measuring Student Growth. (D)(2)i Colorado already has in place a system to currently measure individual student progress for all students in all grades and subjects tested on the state assessments. As discussed in Selection Criterion B, the state will identify interim assessments that will also be used to measure student growth for the purpose of educator evaluator. The application does not fully addresses the relevant definitions for this criterion as cited in the notice--Student achievement means: a) For tested grades and subjects:(1) a student's score on the state's assessments under ESEA; and, as appropriate,(2)other measures of student learning; (b) For non-tested grades and subjects: alternate measures of student learning and performance that are rigorous and comparable across classrooms. (D)(2)ii Developing Evaluation Systems. Work to develop evaluation systems for teachers and principals is well underway in Colorado. By the start of 2011-12, all participating LEAs will have designed evaluation systems that meet the specifications required in this criteria. LEAs will also need to comply with the rubric and guidelines that will be issued by the Governor's Council on Education Effectiveness. The evaluation systems will follow a 3 phase implementation process to accommodate LEA differences in readiness and resource availability. Teacher and principal involvement is addressed through the creation of Transformation Councils and participation on the Governor's Council for Educator Effectiveness which is expected to launch a collaborative process involving to develop minimal attributes of high quality evaluation systems that use measures of student growth. Resources will be available to LEAs in need of temporary staff capacity to manage the evaluation roll out. For LEAs requiring such supplemental but temporary capacity, the state application does not make clear how this local capacity will be sustained. Across plan components there does not appear to be a concern to substantiate nor address the lack of union leadership endorsement of the RttT application in 59% of the participating districts. (D)(2)iii Conducting Annual Evaluations. Colorado has set a time frame of 2012-13 for all participating LEAs to implement high quality evaluation systems. The systems as described will draw on multiple data sources utilizing SchoolView as a platform and including student growth data based on the state assessments (The Colorado Growth Model), Educator Impact Reports based on state assessments and interim assessments as they become available. LEAs are expected to use these reports as part of each educator's evaluation. The description and design features of this plan element comply with the requirements in criterion(D)(2) ii. (D)(2)iv Using Evaluations to Inform Key Decisions. The requirements set forth have been adequately addressed in the plan narrative and supporting exhibits. The plan acknowledges where changes will be needed in terms of state policy or legislative enactments. The establishment of a number of high level advisory entities involving leading stakeholders and inclusion of collaborative procedures throughout the plan components will ensure maximum effectiveness and impact. Of particular note, is the concurrent effort of the state to provide leadership in support of a deliberate dismissal process of ineffective teachers and principals while at the same time aggressively developing a robust cadre of personnel with high potential to work effectively in the most critical high need areas.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	14	14
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	7	7

(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas

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(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(D)(3)i Ensuring Equitable Distribution in High Poverty and Minority Schools. Colorado proposes 3 key strategies to accomplish this plan component: • Incentives and support to improve the recruitment and retention of new and existing teachers and principals • Efforts to increase the effectiveness of personnel already employed • Communicating clear expectations and procedures for dismissal of teaching and administrative staff who have had ample opportunity to improve. There will be a number of initiatives launched along with existing program enhancements to address this critical goal area including: the Colorado AP initiative, a Math/Science and Innovation Academy, and grants to high quality teacher preparation programs to support their efforts to disseminate evidence based best practices. By the end of 2013-2014, the state projects at least 22% (a 5% increase over a 4 year period) of teachers and at least 10% of principals (a 9% increase over a 4 year period) in high poverty/high minority schools (HPHM) will be highly effective. Goals related to reducing ineffective educators in HPHM schools include: By 2013-2014 no more than 5% of teachers and 1% of principals in HPMN schools will be ineffective. Clarification is needed on these goals. Projected improvement targets appear modest in this area as compared to the level of effort proposed and resource allocation. (D)(3)ii Ensuring Equitable Distribution in Hard to Staff Subjects and Specialty Areas. The state will utilize 2 key strategies to achieve the intent of this criterion: • Targeted incentives to expand the "hard to staff" subject areas • Targeted incentives to expand programs that produce effective teachers in "hard to staff" subject areas. The application does not adequately address comparability and alignment between goals, performance measures and student achievement targets across plan components. The application narrative presents the following goal statement: By the end of 2013—2014 academic year, 40% of teachers in "hard to reach" subjects in schools within the participating LEAs will be effective. By contrast, Performance Measures for (D)(3)ii, project targets by 2013-2014 of (20-30%) of teachers in math, Science, special education and language instruction educational programs "who were evaluated as effective or better". This represents an increase of only 5% over a 4-5 year timeframe. Given the research and knowledge base regarding the interaction between effective teaching and learning, the application does not adequately address how such a modest increase will impact the state's long term student achievement targets. Stronger alignment is needed between these 2 plan assurance areas. Additionally, consideration should be given to reserving a percent of incentive funding for teacher endorsements and certifications in hard to reach subjects so as to ensure that attention to new certification receives a high priority in incentive allocations.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(D)(4)i Reporting Data on the Effectiveness of Educator Preparation Programs By July 2011 and thereafter, the state department of education will publish a report on effectiveness of preparation programs in state and out of state, when available. The report will also include placement, mobility and retention rates for Colorado graduates employed by local LEAs. By July 2012, the Colorado Center for Educator Effectiveness (CCEE) will publish a Return on Investments Metrics for preparation programs which will allow prospective education students to select the most effective programs for their needs. In order to maximize effectiveness in interpreting and use of the data produced, outreach efforts should be made to involve teacher and principal preparation providers in the design and release of the data. The communications collaborative should be engaged to provide advice on how to best release and communicate this new area of important data. An effort should be made to collect and report teacher and principal effectiveness information from all public sector teacher employers so that measures of effectiveness can be gleaned no matter where students are enrolled. To the extent feasible, data should also be collected on the number and percentage of teachers and principals who receive preparation from agencies or institutions outside the state and information should be made available on student achievement tied to these agencies as well. (D)(4)ii Expanding Preparation and Credentialing Options. The applicant will implement three key strategies in this area: • Evaluate the success of educator preparation programs and publish an annual report on teacher

effectiveness for 100% of the in-state programs • Expand preparation programs that are successfully producing effective teachers and principals with particular emphasis on Teach For America, the Turnaround Leadership Academy and grant awards to programs that prepare effective educators for high need schools and those that create or expand partnerships with LEAs that employ their graduates. • Increase the overall effectiveness of all educator preparation programs in the state. One of the most significant investments (24 million over 4 years) in the RttT grant application is based on a collaborative endeavor with Teach For America (TFA). According to the proposal, the effectiveness of Teach for America is being judged by data gleaned from national reports on Impact (Broad Foundation and The Urban Institute). Neither the proposal from TFA nor the RttT plan appears to address any aspects of evaluation. The sheer size of this investment would seem to argue for an explicit plan and budget for evaluating the TFA work over the next four years.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals

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(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state will focus on 4 key strategies: • Offer through SchoolView professional development programs and instructional resources with a track record of improving student outcomes • Facilitate widespread access to peer to peer resources • Focus on developing instructional leadership within the persistently lowest performing schools • Provide a customized blend of support tied to individual needs of principals and teachers. LEAs will use three primary strategies to monitor, evaluate and continuously improve the effectiveness of professional development supports available to teachers and principals: • LEAs will track educator participation and analyze evaluation and student growth data to assess the relative effectiveness of supports. • CCEE will develop the Educator Growth Model—a set of metrics for measuring how well a particular LEA or school improves educator effectiveness over time. The state department of education will publish annual LEA and school rankings based on this metric • LEAs and schools will use the TELL survey to gauge whether the professional development they receive is adequate and effective. Over all the state has outlined a comprehensive plan for data informed professional development and other educator supports deemed to be crucial to instructional improvements and student achievement. The plan covers a range of supports including data based decision making, special supports to educators in high need schools, incentive based innovations, job-embedded supports and new professional development opportunities. The plan components appear adequate to address the support needs of individuals as well as groups of educators associated with high need areas, e.g. critical shortage subject areas, at risk students, etc. The applicant's plan for evaluation as presented is inadequate to effectively measure the results of the large scope of work outlined in this area. While an important component of the evaluation process should link supports to student achievement outcomes, it is equally important to have qualitative information on which to judge impact and to use for continuous improvement. The 3 strategies proposed are conceptually based in survey methods of evaluation design. These evaluation strategies should be expanded to include deeper examination of program implementation and impact along with traditional qualitative methods of evaluation practice. A mixed method evaluation approach along these lines would yield more powerful results.

Total

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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The applicant is in full compliance with this criterion. The state's Accountability Act of 2009 assigns legal authority to the Commissioner and the Colorado Department of Education to intervene directly in the State's persistently lowest achieving schools and in LEA's that are in improvement or corrective action status. Evidence of this authority is described in Exhibit VI.E (1)-1, A Summary of the Education Accountability Act

of 2009 which cites the bill's 2 major purposes of the bill: •Enhance oversight of improvement strategies for low performing districts and schools supported by a state review panel appointed by the Commissioner of Education•Create a fairer, clearer and more effective cycle of supports including intervention and turnaround support for chronically low performing districts and schools.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	31	31
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	3	3
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	28	28

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(E)(2)i Identifying the Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools. The applicant will use the Colorado Growth Model to identify the persistently lowest-achieving schools. This model utilizes academic achievement of students in terms of proficiency based on the State's assessments of reading and mathematics combined with growth on those assessments over a period of three years. Colorado has been recognized as a national leader among state peers for its use of large scale assessment results via a vls the Colorado Growth Model. A number of other states have embraced the growth model and are currently implementing it in their respective jurisdictions. In prioritizing schools selected for intervention, the state will consider: 1) the number of enrolled students, 2) urban and rural school needs, 3) whether or not it is a drop out recovery school, and 4) the local capacity and commitment to implement with fidelity one of the four intervention models. The proposed fourth area cited for consideration raises a concern based on the research literature which documents the dominant conditions and environments typically associated with low achieving schools serving high poverty and high minority students, e.g. low expectations, ineffective pedagogy, minimal levels of parental involvement, inequitable distribution of financial resources along with lack of high quality and experienced teachers and school leaders. The applicant does not provide a rationale that supports using local capacity/commitment as a discriminatory factor to eliminate schools that are most likely in need of the most intervention. Consistent with the state's plan to "build human capital pipelines", an important component in prioritizing schools for intervention should include a focused evaluation of the school's capacity and commitment thereby allowing specific identified weaknesses in this area to be addressed as part of the intervention support. (E)(2)ii Turning Around the Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools. Colorado's application presents an ambitious approach to improving achievement for all of the state's students and includes a range of complex interventions and activities to address its persistently lowest achieving schools. The plan requires that commitments from LEAs be secured in the form of memorandum of understanding from superintendents and school boards to carry out one of the four interventions models required by this criterion. The state's track record in working with low performance schools has been sporadic and is documented in Exhibit VIE(2)ii-5d. Given this mixed track record and the ambitious nature of the current proposal, further attention should be given to: • Assessment of CDE's internal capacity to successfully implement the work outlined and projected needed talents and expertise • Plans for collaboration with community based agencies, non educational service providers and other out of school supports, e.g. health agencies, volunteer organizations and recreational centers.

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

Colorado's presentation clarified the relationship for implementation and accountability related to the CDE's internal office responsible for turning around low performing schools and the Turnaround Center which will be created as a separate non-profit entity.

Total	50	41	41
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	4	4	

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

From 2008-2009, the level of Colorado's education expenditures increased by 5%. As a result of substantial increases in the overall state expenditures caused by the economic recession, state education expenditures as a percentage of total state expenditures decreased by 2 %--from 45-43 % during the period 2008-2009. Based on this information, the application does not meet the first section of the specified criterion. The Colorado School Finance Act (SFA) includes an equity based funding formula that adjusts base funding according to student and LEA characteristics such as high need. LEAs with more than 20% of students in poverty are considered high need. The state policy for distribution of state funds within LEAs between high poverty schools and other schools is less clear. In addition to the base per pupil funding allocation an additional amount is provided to LEAs based on an "at risk" funding formula. The SFA requires that the LEA allocates at least 75% of its "at risk" funding to school or LEA wide instructional programs for "at risk" students or for staff development associated with teaching "at risk" students. Eligibility for participation in the federal free lunch program is used as a proxy for of each school district's "at risk" population. In 2005-2006, the state's definition of "at risk" was expanded to include students whose state assessment scores are not included in calculating a school's performance grade because the student's dominant language is not English and who are also not eligible for free lunch. Aside from these identified "at risk" funds, there does not appear to be a state policy that requires LEAs to allocate the general base funding amount to be tied to poverty. Two districts in the state are experimenting with additional resource allocation variations using weighted student funding formulas but information was not provided to indicate what specific definitions are used to determine the weights. Further information is needed to evaluate whether poverty is indeed a key factor in determining how the state defines equity for the distribution of state funds within LEAs.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools

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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Review of the application narrative and supporting evidence presented in Exhibits VI.F (2) I-v) indicates that Colorado has adequately addressed the following criteria related to charter and autonomous schools. The Colorado Charter School Act (Statutes C.R.S 22-30.5-109/22-30.5-504) places no limits on the number of charter schools in the state or on the number of students that these schools may enroll. Specific procedures and guidelines in both the Colorado state law and Charter School Standard Application provide detailed guidance regarding how charter authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize and close schools. Additionally, clear expectations are set forth in these documents pertaining to student achievement as a key factor in determining charter school reauthorization or renewal as well as ensuring that charter school student enrollments are similar to local district populations. There are currently 153 charter school operating throughout the state. The application indicates that designated authorizers have taken action to close 9 charter schools over the period 2006-2009. Charter schools in Colorado receive 100% of LEA per pupil operating revenues in accordance to the School Finance Act (SFA) and have access to additional state and federal resources, e.g. a proportionate share of SFA set aside for at-risk-students, a share of federal and state categorical aid programs, etc. In 2008 the Colorado legislature through the enactment of the Innovation Schools Act created a new category of autonomous schools. Several documents included in the application describe the state's process for enabling LEAs to operate innovative and autonomous public schools: Options for Autonomous Schools in Colorado; A Handbook for School and District Leaders/Innovation Schools Act Fact Sheet, April 6, 2009 Commissioner's Statement on Choice Innovation. To date 3 schools have been granted Innovation School status by the Denver Board of Education. Other districts have chosen to create a process by which individual schools can apply to receive greater autonomy. Modeled after the Boston Public Schools' Pilot Schools Programs, there are three Pilot Schools currently operating in Colorado. One of the key features of Pilot Schools is the partnership between the district/local school and the teachers' union.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions

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3

3

(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Colorado has been in the forefront of the educational reform movement for more than 10 years. The application narrative and Exhibit VI.A(3)i-1 provides a comprehensive review of these efforts. The information provided is closely aligned to the RttT reform areas. Plan components in the state's RttT application build significantly on this track record of leadership, success and innovation in several areas: improving state education agency capacity, formation of strategic partnerships, development of content standards, and establishment of a student achievement growth model. Additional legislative enactments have focused on accountability for results, early childhood education, school choice and postsecondary readiness. The application does not clearly discriminate between the reforms that are aligned with RttT Conditions Criteria and "other conditions favorable to reform and innovation." The application provides general information on program impact, but does not address specifically this criterion's requirement for "laws, regulations, policy or other conditions.... that have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes."

Total	55	47	47
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

STEM initiatives are woven throughout the Colorado proposal in all plan criterion. The STEM emphasis includes a combination of program enhancements, expansion and new activities. There is already a strong STEM presence and network in the state. Given the significant funding stream available to promote STEM education, this existing investment combined with RttT resources would leverage the state's capacity to prepare students with the skills and competencies required by the STEM workforce. In order to maximize STEM/RttT impact greater attention is needed to more fully integrating/institutionalizing STEM throughout the RttT overall strategy and plans for each of the reform criterion areas. Colorado should also give more attention to isolating the problems associated with STEM Criteria iii, namely, underrepresented groups in STEM areas, and design specific strategies and performance measures to align with these gaps.

Total	15	15	15	
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The applicant has addressed the four ARRA reform areas as well as all Success Factor Criteria required. Overall Colorado deserves high marks for its track record in having significant work already in place. In many areas Colorado has been a pioneer and provided substantial service to other states by piloting models and other approaches to reform that have been embraced. This is undoubtedly an ambitious and bold commitment. With some refinements as noted in the specific criterion sections, Colorado would be well positioned to accomplish the goals of the RttT competition.

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total

500

390

390



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

Colorado Application #1600CO-2



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	65	65	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	45	45	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	15	15	

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The state has provided a reform agenda that provides for: 1. Ensuring all students have access to a high-quality public school choice; 2. Developing educator capacity to deliver standards-based, data-driven instruction; 3. Providing incentives for effectiveness, knowledge capture and sharing best practices; and 4. Creating opportunities for innovation in school organization, support models, educator practice, educator evaluation and turnaround strategies. This section follows the ARRA prescribed areas. It provides a clear and credible path to achieve the goals for the plan and creates ambitious targets for raising the percentage of students who are proficient in mathematics and reading while seeking to narrow achievement gaps among student groups. The plan is targeted toward improving student readiness for postsecondary education. The plan was arrived at through a statewide conversation by stakeholders and is embedded in Colorado's strategic plan, Forward Thinking. Of particular importance is the sustainability of the programs once RTTT funding is gone by using short term funds to continue with the reform efforts. The program management in developing and implementing the planned projects is especially strong. The history of education reform in the state is similarly impressive. (ii) The commitment of 134 LEAs as well as 143 charter schools represents 94% of Colorado's students. Signatures were obtained from all Superintendents and Board Presidents in the participating school districts. Forty-one percent of the union leaders in schools with collective bargaining agreements have also given their support to the plan. The MOU is a strong statement of support for the plan by participating LEAs which represent 94% of the students statewide and 94% of students in poverty. This is further strengthened by the scope-of-work which represents 100% compliance with the reform plan. This represents a broad statewide impact affecting 753,707 students out of a statewide number of 802,155. Two hundred and ninety-four thousand students in poverty (94%) are represented in these numbers. (iii) The application has a detailed table by LEA that meets the information required in the criterion. The Scope of Work Summary Table, LEA Summary Table and Signature Summary Table is also included. In short, The applicant provides a very clear picture of their reform agenda. It is coherent and comprehensive and provides a solid management plan for implementation. The LEA commitment page is particularly strong in impacting nearly every student in the state.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	30	30	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	20	20	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10	10	

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(a) (i) The narrative provides a description of the leadership team to be used for the implementation of the statewide reform plans. It includes forming a RTTT office within the CDE. This will be led by a Chief Executive Officer who will report directly to the Commissioner of education. S/he will be charged with executing the plan. This person will be assisted by a Chief Financial Officer with responsibility for daily operations and financial management. Other key individuals will include a LEA Outreach Director who is charged with coordinating LEA activities, Overseeing communications, outreach and change management efforts. The Project Team will be composed of CDE personnel with expertise in the reform area. The RTTT Office also adds a project advisory board. Also in an advisory capacity will be a Leadership Investment Board composed of representatives from business and education sectors. Finally, there is a partnership with the University of Colorado, The Parthenon Group, The New Teacher Project, Teach for America, Public Impact and Project VOYCE. These key players provide a strong leadership team for implementing the Plan. The information provided shows a strong management plan and identifies all persons responsible for carrying out the reform plan through the proposed RTTT office. Especially well developed in this section is description of the effective and efficient operations and processes that serve the delivery of services to districts. The budget supports the activities that will be carried out and the alignment of federal and state grant funds will tend to support the program in the early stages of development and provide for the continuation of the programs and personnel once the program is finished. (2) (ii) Colorado has engaged a number of important stakeholders in support of the plan. These include: 1. The Colorado Education Association; 2. BizCares with 30 member organizations (chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, business roundtables, and industry associations.); 3. The Colorado Association of School Boards; 4. The Colorado Association of School Executives; 5. The charter school community; 6. Higher education institutions; 7. The early childhood community; 8. STEM organizations; and 9. Legislative leaders. Stakeholder support is a key strength of this section. The CDE has gathered together a wide range of individuals and organizations in support of the grant goals from the education, political and business communities.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	21	21
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	16	16

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) Colorado has been engaged in a series of initiatives that directly involve the reforms stated in this application. The Appendix points out the direction that these initiatives have taken. 1. Alignment and Accountability—Adopted standards based assessments (1997). 2. Closing Achievement Gaps—Closing the Achievement Gap Commission (2003). Funds authorized for a pilot project (2008). 3. Data—Colorado Growth Model ((2008). 4. School View—This provides a repository for CGM data (2009). 5. Early Childhood Education—Colorado Preschool Program (1988) 6. Educator Preparation and Effectiveness—A collection of preparation programs for educators. 7. Post-Secondary Readiness—This allowed concurrent enrollment options (2009). 8. Schools of Choice—Enrollment in any public school (1990). Charter School Act (1992). Innovative Schools Act (2008). This illustrate the progressive nature of their reform accomplishments and bears strong evidence of their proactive attempts to deal with each of the reform areas. A number funding sources, state and federal, have been used in the past to initiate these reforms. (ii) While Asian and White students continue to outperform other subgroups on NAEP and CSAP tests in reading and math, the narrative does point to some impressive gains by subgroups and particularly Hispanic and African American students. The graphs are a fine addition to supporting these statements since they not only serve to illustrate the gap that exists in performance but to show the growth in subgroups from 2003-04 through 2008-2009. The growth is slow but steady over time and attributed to several programs put in place at that time. The graduation rate is difficult to assess given that the calculation rate for graduation has changed. Based on evidence over the past three years, there appears to be a leveling off of graduating students at a much lower rate than previously. Based only on the last three years, the graduation rates do not appear to be increasing. Section (ii) needs to be strengthened by providing direct connections between student

outcomes and the activities/programs that have led to that improvement. Exclusion rates need to be provided.

Total	125	116	116
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	38	38	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	18	18	

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) This is a well documented area. The state has entered into a consortium formed with the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers together with a majority of the states that are developing a common set of standards (K-12). This meets all the requirements of this section since they are internationally benchmarked, build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation and provide a draft of the proposed standards. (ii) (a) The legal process for adopting standards (Appendix) is fully explained in this section and provides information on the State's plan for implementation, its current progress, and timeframe for adoption (by August 2, 2010). More information would be helpful to provide specific elaboration on the activities that will be undertaken in this process other than referring to CAP4K.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	7	7
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

While the state does provide a memorandum of understanding with a consortium (SMARTER) that is developing high-quality assessments, the consortium includes only 12 other states. As with other reform efforts, Colorado has formed an Assessment Stakeholders Advisory Committee which seeks to assure that the new assessment redesign is consistent with Colorado's principles to: --Gauge student knowledge and skill and inform teaching and learning --Include provisions for preschool assessment and postsecondary/workforce assessments --Lend itself to analysis of yearly growth --Be administered online or electronically with real-time turnaround of results --Allow multiple possibilities for the student to take equated forms within the same year --Gauge mastery --Be relevant to students, parents, and educators --Include a rich mix of items (such as multiple-choice, open-ended constructed response, and online simulations) --Be accessible to all (including English language development and alternative assessments) These items represent a commitment to improving the quality of the state's assessments.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20	20
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Colorado is undertaking new initiatives as part of a plan to support a statewide transition to and implementation of internationally benchmarked K-12 standards that build to college and career readiness. These initiatives include: 1) Supporting the creation of new curricula, instructional materials and classroom-level assessments through Content Collaboratives in high-capacity LEAs 2) Building and supporting Regional Learning Communities to execute local professional development and support for standards-based and data-driven practices statewide 3) Supporting the creation and dissemination of formative assessment items to be incorporated into the SchoolView platform 4) Supporting the vetting, evaluation, and purchase of interim assessments on which educator evaluation and classroom-level data-driven

practice will be based The state presents a credible plan that moves them to both enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. It is organizationally strong, with realistic, goals, activities, and timelines and identifies organizational responsibility throughout. This approach provides a means of developing capacity that will extend beyond the grant period. The goals for this plan appear below: --Build the capacity of educators to provide effective standards-based, data-driven instruction; --Provide high-quality instructional materials and assessments to implement standards-based learning; --Ensure effective implementation of activities

Total	70	65	65
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18	18	

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(1) The statewide longitudinal data system has not been fully implemented. Three elements of the America COMPETES need to be completed to fully satisfy this section. These include: --Capacity to communicate with higher education data systems; --Teacher identified system with the ability to match teachers to students; and --Information regarding student transition from secondary school to post-secondary education.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The plan presented here provides a credible and effective means of ensuring that data from the state's longitudinal data system is accessible to and used by key stakeholders. SchoolView will be valuable asset in providing information to the public. It appears to have an ease of access for users and once the capacity to access and manage the information within SchoolView, this will allow decision-makers to continually improve efforts in such areas as policy, instruction, operations, management, resource allocation and overall effectiveness. As with other sections of the narratives, the state provides goals, activities, timelines and the person(s) responsible for carrying out the activities. This is a major strength of the application since it provides clear evidence of a thoughtful, considerate approach to achieving the goals of the program/plan.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	18	18
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(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The information provides a comprehensive view about the plans ability to increase the acquisition, adoption and use of local instructional improvement systems and provides through this system an effective means of delivering professional development and continually improving instruction. Here are the major goals for the plan: --Deploy enhanced SchoolView platform to host instructional improvement systems and unique stakeholder portals which provide access to teachers, principals and administrators as well as parents/guardians, teacher preparation; --Provide support through Content Collaboratives & Regional Learning Communities for individual educators, educational leaders, students and other stakeholders to use SchoolView to generate and capture knowledge and make decisions related to improving learning programs, the public, policymakers and researchers; --Provide support through Content Collaboratives & Regional Learning Communities for individual educators, educational leaders, students and other stakeholders to use SchoolView to generate and capture knowledge and make decisions related to improving learning; and --Researchers have access to a Researcher Data Mart of P-20 longitudinal data at the state and local levels linked to school improvement strategies and expenditures. The plan includes information as to how this system will be delivered to researchers and provides them with information that could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional materials, strategies and approaches to different

types of students. The implementation of this plan will have a strong impact on providing information for all players.

Total	47	41	41
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	16	16	

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i), (ii), (iii) This state provides legislation that includes alternative routes to certification. It provides substantial information in the Appendix and names the "qualified providers" who can offer alternative pathways. Colorado law provides that school districts, BOCES, charter or independent schools, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, or any combination of the above, may apply to become a designated agency and offer either a one- or two-year alternative teacher licensure program. Current law requires that candidates hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited IHE, includes supervised, school-based experiences including mentoring and allows testing-out toward coursework completion. The license they receive does not differ from traditional preparation programs. Alternative paths are provided for principal certification in the same manner as that designed for teachers. Any LEA offering an alternative principal licensure program may work with a governmental, nonprofit, or for-profit entity in designing and implementing that program. Although not limited to such candidates, the legislation was passed with an explicit intent to enable persons from outside the education community to develop the skills and experiences necessary to successfully lead a public school. Mentoring and coaching are provided to support teachers during their initial years teaching. Shortages of teaching personnel and principals are met through the alternative program in cooperation with LEAs and BOCES who provide surveys of school districts to determine the needs in subject areas. The total number of teachers and principals certified statewide have been supplied. The number of teachers and principals that successfully completed each program in the previous academic year has been included in the response. The small numbers of teachers and principals completing the alternative pathways needs to be explained fully.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	58	58
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	15	15
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	28	28

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

This entire section is very orderly and comprehensive. Goals and activities are spelled out that can provide a system that provides substantial information on student progress and the use of that information in making informed decisions on the professional development of both teachers and principals. The movement toward yearly evaluations of teachers is a major step forward from current practice as is the development of an evaluation system using student data to inform decisions regarding teacher and principal compensation and retention in the system. The performance measures offered at the end of this section are both consistent with and supported by the plan. (i) The state currently measures individual student growth and will use this assessment for the purpose of teacher evaluation. (ii) The intent here is to design and implement a rigorous, transparent and fair evaluation system for teachers and principals that (a) differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories and (b) takes into account student growth data as a significant factor. This design

will use four variables in the evaluation of teachers and principals. One of these variables, student growth, will constitute 50% of the evaluation. This will be developed with both teacher and principal input. (iii) The plan will include conducting annual evaluations of teachers and principals that include timely and constructive feedback. Educator Impact Reports will provide teachers and principals with data on student growth for their students, classes and schools. (iv) The evaluations will be the basis for developing teachers and principals, including providing relevant coaching, induction support and professional development. The plan that is in place for this section identifies steps leading to compensating, promoting and retaining teachers and principals and addresses using the data to inform decisions both regarding the granting of tenure and/or full certification as well as removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	25	25
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	15	15
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	10	10

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The plan is a credible means to achieving success in this area. It includes a number of goals leading to the recruitment and retention of effective teachers and principals while at the same time increasing teacher and principal effectiveness. Specific targets include: (1) incentives and support to retain and recruit effective teachers and principals; (2) increasing the effectiveness of teachers already serving in a high-poverty or high-minority school; and (3) includes dismissal of ineffective teachers and principals. The targets set for this are ambitious but achievable. A table leading to attainment of these objectives is provided. This is a very strong section, not only because of the data provided for achieving results but for the organization of the plan. (ii) The plan provides incentives and strategies for educators to obtain endorsements in hard-to-staff subjects/specialty areas. Information is provided about (1) incentives for expanding the subjects in which effective experienced teachers are prepared to teach and (2) incentives for expanding the programs that produce effective teachers. This area is particularly solid and provides specificity in developing goals, activities and responsibilities in an accompanying timeline as was found in (I).

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	14	14
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The plan calls for an annual public report on teacher and principal preparation programs in Colorado by linking teacher, student growth and achievement with the credentialing programs. To achieve this, the plan calls for a three step process: (1) They will evaluate the success of the teacher preparation programs by tying student growth to the teachers and the institutions that prepared them. (2) They will arm these institutions with the information from these evaluations so they can make adjustments and improvements to their programs. (3) The state will make strategic investments in the teacher preparation programs that produce effective teachers and principals so these programs may be expanded. (ii) The plan calls for expansion grants for preparation programs for teachers and principals to expand the most successful programs at producing effective educators. This includes investing in Teach for America. This is a quite complete description of the path toward achieving more successful programs in schools of education and ultimately improving effectiveness in the classroom. A table is presented that provides a path leading to the goals of this section.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	18	18
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(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) This is a major support program for teachers and principals. There are a number of innovative pieces in the overall plan to increase the effectiveness of teachers, principals and classroom instruction. Among them are the CDE lists four key strategies listed below. 1) Offer through SchoolView professional development programs and instructional resources with a track record of success improving student outcomes; (2) Facilitate widespread access to high-quality peer-to-peer resource; (3) Focus on developing and supporting instructional leadership within the persistently lowest-achieving schools; and (4) Provide professional development resources that are customized to the identified needs of individual teachers and principals. There approach is to use data from the improved assessment system to inform professional development and to provide effective, ongoing, job-embedded support for teachers and principals. There is a systematic effort to provide financial rewards teachers who submit best practices to SchoolView and to provide financial incentives to effective teachers who take on additional responsibilities. (ii) The plan offers three specific goals to measure, evaluate and continuously improve the effectiveness of the supports in improving student achievement. The CDE lists the following three strategies. First, with technical assistance from the CDE as needed, participating LEAs will track educator participation in professional development and analyze evaluation and student growth data to assess the relative effectiveness of supports. Second, the CCEE will develop the Colorado Educator Growth Model—a set of metrics for measuring how well a particular LEA or school improves educator effectiveness over time. Finally, LEAs and schools will use the biannual TELL survey to gauge to what extent educators believe that they receive adequate and effective professional development and support. With technical assistance from the CDE as needed, schools and LEAs will use these results to inform improvement efforts. This is a strong plan that represents an important reform measure that reaches down into every classroom. It would be helpful to provide a measure for such things as the principal's academy to determine their effectiveness.

Total	138	131	131
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The Education Accountability Act of 2009 provides legal authority for directly intervening in persistently low-achieving schools. They state: "For schools and LEAs that are persistently lowest-performing and reach turnaround status, a state review panel reviews LEA and school plans and makes recommendations for appropriate interventions, including changes of leadership where current leadership does not appear to possess the necessary capacity. When a school remains in turnaround status for five years, the State has statutory authority to require dramatic changes that are essentially identical to Race to the Top's four models, including external management, conversion to charter school or ?innovation school status, reorganization, or school closure. The State has the authority to mandate similar changes for entire LEAs.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	40	40
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35	35

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The text identifies lowest-achieving schools which are a priority for intervention as those schools that are Title I schools on improvement, Title I-eligible secondary schools that do not currently receive Title I funds, and high schools with a graduation rate less than 60 percent. The Appendix identifies the lowest-achieving schools and an excellent and comprehensive process for improvement is provided in this section. (ii) Aside from a comprehensive and complete description of their plans to identify and implement turnaround plans

for persistently low achieving schools, the plan adds --Creating a Colorado Turnaround Center; --Building human capital pipelines to support turnaround efforts; and --Offering competitive funding streams to carry out dramatic changes. This plan is of a high-quality which provides achievable targets to support its LEAs in turning around these schools by implementing one of the four intervention models.

Total	50	50	50
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	5	5	

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) From 2008 to 2009, the State's education expenditures increased 5 percent from \$8.9 billion in 2008 to \$9.4 billion in 2009. However, as a percentage of state revenues these revenues declined. (ii) The state funding formula is a sophisticated means of funding school districts and providing equity in the distribution of funds. Funds are specifically designated within the formula for high need and high poverty schools and LEAs. Such things as student poverty, size of the school district, numbers of ELL students and special education students all affect the amount of funding going to a school district. The narrative offers the following funding formula: (Funded pupil count x total per-pupil funding) + (at-risk funding) + (online funding) = Total Program Funding The information found here provide strong evidence of an equitable funding policy.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	40	40
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The Charter Schools Act does not limit the number of charter schools that are authorized or limit the number of students that may attend them. They say: "In fact, the Act expressly prohibits LEAs from placing moratoria on the number of charter schools in their LEAs and provides that authorizers may not place limits on enrollment at a specific school, except that a charter school and its authorizer may agree upon limits that are necessary to achieve the school's mission and goals or to stay within the school's physical capacity. The number and types of charter schools has been included. (ii) The narrative and Appendix describe a strong state law that oversees the approval of charter schools and their monitoring, accountability, reauthorization and closing. This is a quite complete rendering of the law governing the operation of charters. Information is provided as to the number of charter school applications made in the state, number of applications approved, applications denied and reasons for the denials and the number of charter schools closed. (iii) Charters are funded in the same manner as LEAs and receive 100% of what the LEA would receive. In addition, high risk schools receive additional funds per the state aid formula. They receive a proportionate share of federal and state categorical funding. (iv) This is another strong inducement to the operation of charter school. The state does provide facility funding in the same way as LEAs. In addition, state capital funds are specifically designated to assist them in their facility needs. (v) The state has in effect a policy for the operation of innovative, autonomous public schools. The Aurora and Denver Public schools have been the principle developers of these schools. Substantial evidence for the approval and operation of these schools is provided.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state has provided ample evidence throughout the application and in this section of numerous proactive steps that address conditions favorable for the reform and innovation leading to important outcomes. They list the following reform models: CAP4K, the Education Accountability Act of 2009, the Educator Identifier Act, the Innovation Schools Act, the establishment of the School Leadership Academy, the Colorado

Growth Model. Other reform conditions have been noted in this presentation and are found in the Appendix. The proactive nature of their efforts over the years forms the impression in the reader's mind that this state is fertile ground for reform to take place.

Total	55	50	50
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0	0	

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The STEM plan does not have the depth that is required for this priority. Although there are several measures to offer a rigorous course of study in mathematics and science, both technology and engineering are not covered with the same depth. An implementation plan similar to that used throughout the preceding narrative would be helpful to develop and organized plan for the implementation of STEM programs statewide. Goals, activities, timelines and persons responsible for implementing the STEM plan must be spelled out. The inclusion of underrepresented groups, including women and minorities is not mentioned. Generally, the plan refers to serving all students. The plan should provide information that would be both helpful in recruiting and retaining students in STEM programs. While it is not a requirement, including national programs such as Project Lead the Way would be an asset to the program since it does provide the very attributes that STEM programs seek. This section needs to describe an implementation plan that does deal effectively with underrepresented groups and needs more information on improving study in the areas of technology and engineering.

Total	15	0	0
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

This is an extremely well documented presentation. In keeping with the requirements for this priority, the application is comprehensive and coherently addresses the required ARRA reform measures as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. The activities presented in the application as part of the reform agenda are in many cases related to ongoing programs started well before RTTT. The application supports and extends those activities leading to a timelier implementation. LEA support, so important to fulfilling the goals of this program, involves the majority of school districts and charter schools and insures the extension of the reform agenda to all students in the state. From all the evidence that has been presented here, these ambitious but achievable goals will have provided major benefits to the students.

Total		0	0
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Grand Total	500	453	453
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

Colorado Application #1600CO-3



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	38	38	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	3	3	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	31	31	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	4	4	

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The application effectively articulates a comprehensive, coherent reform agenda reflective of ongoing state initiatives and aspirational objectives for the future. However, the narrative is generally lacking in elaborative supporting statements to specifically indicate how the state intends to accomplish its agenda. For example, the application fails to describe any types of incentives that might be devised as part of the State reform agenda to create exemplary and sustainable learning communities. The goals are ambitious and the application demonstrates that the State benefits from an existing, strong education reform platform. However, this competition demands deeper visibility into the state's detailed thinking in terms of tactics which is not presented in the plan. (ii) The percentage of participating LEAs reflects an exceptionally high percentage participation of critical student sub-groups. However, the criterion also require that the MOU reach the minimum level of guidelines provided in the Notice for Terms and Conditions. Colorado's LEA MOU falls short in a very important area. The State Recourse for LEA Non-Performance section has been substantially weakened. The stated recourse in the MOU has eliminated the guidance language relating to enforcement actions for those districts who fail to meet their commitments: "any of the enforcement measures that are detailed in 34 CFR Section 80.43 including putting the LEA on reimbursement payment status, temporarily withholding funds". The State's MOU speaks only to a collaborative process and disallowing costs which essentially removes the heart of any meaningful recourse. In addition, of the 88 LEAs with applicable collective bargaining agreements who have executed the MOU, only 38 or 41% of those LEAs have obtained the support of the local union. Successful state reform efforts must have the strong support of the local unions. Without their participation, the possibility for obstruction of the reform agenda is heightened. The initial scope of work in the MOU does support a comprehensive, statewide, comprehensive reform agenda with evidence of a commitment in each area by the participating LEAs. (iii) The application makes a compelling case for the large representation of critical student sub-groups that is necessary for any comprehensive reform. This aspect is commendable and impressive. However, the criterion also require visibility with regard to increasing student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps, increasing high school graduation rates, increasing college enrollment and increasing the number of students who complete at least a year's worth of college credit that is applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment in an institution of higher education. Unfortunately, the application is weak or silent in this regard. The application is lacking in supportive narrative language to indicate the State's thinking on specifically how the LEAs will address these areas and translate them into successful reform.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	28	28	
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(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	18	18
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10	10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The State's organizational structure for ensuring long-term success is thoughtful, detailed and comprehensive. The emphasis on incentive pay for the CEO, CFO and Project Team Leaders is visionary and a strong way to reward demonstrated performance. The narrative provides a persuasive case for the State's emphasis on supporting its participating LEAs but with only one Outreach Director for 134 LEAs raises the question of the plan providing sufficient levels of support. The incorporation of a large number of existing State organizations like BizCARES, the Colorado Center for Educator Excellence, the Colorado Turnaround Center and the Colorado Education Research Consortium, not only engages essential groups in the important work but will help ensure the long-term success beyond the grant period. (ii) The State's effective incorporation of existing entities to augment the broad capacity needed to accomplish a robust reform agenda is impressive. It is clear from the application that the larger community across Colorado, in its entirety, is committed to this agenda and to the state's application.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	19	19
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(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	14	14

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The application makes a compelling case on multiple levels in support of strong reform in the four key areas. The focus over the past several years is clear. The refining of the Colorado Growth Model Legislation originally enacted in 2004 then revised in 2007 demonstrates a strong commitment to benefit from updated knowledge in a reasonable timeframe. The various links between State, Federal and philanthropic funds, all targeted with an emphasis on the four critical goals, is also quite impressive. (ii) The criterion requires an overall demonstration of significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps for this section. Further, the criterion require evidence showing improvement in student outcomes overall and by student subgroup since at least 2003 and to explain the connections between the data and actions that have contributed to this improvement in three areas. With regard to the increases across all subgroups, Colorado provides evidence of consistent improvement overall. Even when factoring the demographic changes from 2003-2009 for the Hispanic and free and reduced lunch populations, the overall gains suggest real progress. The application does not provide a timeframe for when the 3 year Closing the Achievement Gap pilot commenced or when it ends therefore it is difficult to assess its impact as historic or future-based. The narrative does not link this pilot to the state's strategies to improve the achievement gap which the data clearly indicate remains a substantial challenge in Colorado. A review of the NAEP and CSAP data provided in the appendix shows a general flat performance in reading across the 2003-2009 period but the narrative fails to provide an explanation of how the State is adjusting its strategy based upon the data story. The CSAP data for sub-groups indicates a meaningful increase in scores for the ELL and Hispanic sub-groups but this success is not evident across all sub-groups as required in the criterion. The High School Graduation rate remains quite disappointing. While it is laudable that the State has gone to great lengths to align its data collection into a meaningful system over the past few years and it is understandable that these adjustments impact upon the ability to identify accurate trends, the data provided do not support the evidence required by the criterion to explain the state's success in increasing high school graduation rates. The narrative suggests that the State is not satisfied with a 75% graduation rate for 2009 but then fails to provide a clear sense of the strategy to improve this outcome now that the data system is fully in place. The narrative does not effectively illuminate what has been accomplished in the past few years relative to the graduation rate nor does it describe the State's plans for adjusting its strategy going forward. Finally, the criterion requires an explanation of the activities undertaken to produce gains in student achievement but the narrative does not address this.

Total	125	85	85
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20	20	

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The application fully meets the requirements within this criterion with the necessary emphasis on standards being internationally benchmarked and that build toward college and career readiness by the time of graduation. Further, the State's participation in a consortium of 48 states substantially meets the criterion for participating with a significant number of States. (ii) The State's commitment to secure adoption of a common set of standards by August 2, 2010 is clearly articulated and well-supported in the narrative as to how this will be accomplished.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments

10	7	7
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The State provides evidence of its participation in SMARTER, a consortia of 12 States focused on developing reliable, open source, online assessments capable of meeting student growth and that are aligned with the State's efforts to establish standards through the Common Core Standards. The State is pursuing its agenda for developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments through the oversight of an Assessment Stakeholder Advisory Committee thereby demonstrating committed accountability for progress. (ii) The State is not participating in a consortium with a significant number of states.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments

20	20	20
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The application demonstrates a coherent, precise and aggressive strategy to support the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. The integration of the State's top talent into a logical, ordered process as this plan describes is excellent. While there are challenges in orchestrating a large number of moving parts, the State is to be commended by the thoroughness of its response in this section. Further, the commitment of performance measures is ambitious, reasonable and consistent with the aspirations that this competition seeks to inspire.

Total	70	67	67
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18	18	

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Evidence is presented that nine of the required twelve elements are currently in place with provision to incorporate the additional three at a future date.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	3	4	
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The application fully supports a credible plan to achieve accessible data from its SLDS and to ensure that the data are used to inform and engage key stakeholders. The existence of SchoolView as a State platform is a solid foundation from which to work. What is not as clear from the narrative or supporting appendices is how user friendly and widely accepted SchoolView is or how the State monitors its overall effectiveness. While the system has only been in place since 2009, it would be useful to know how the State intends to monitor SchoolView's ongoing efficacy. Further, the narrative fails to provide visibility as to the timing of the availability of assessment data for use at the classroom level in order to inform instruction. It is clear that the appropriate stakeholders are involved in building access to the system and the plan is generally persuasive as to the likelihood of success. Finally, the performance measures are ambitious yet reasonable further enhancing the plan as the State has a precise view of what should be accomplished in order to support student achievement through the effective use of data.

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

During the presentation, clarification was provided to describe the constant feedback loop developed by the Colorado Department of Education, on multiple levels, to incorporate user feedback for SchoolView. In addition, the panel clarified the State's overall monitoring process of SchoolView's effectiveness via school visits to determine usage and consistent observation of the numbers of hits across various areas of the website.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	12	12	
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(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

While the application provides a solid, high-quality plan to address each of the elements for this criterion, the narrative explanation surrounding the support of participating LEAs in using instructional improvement systems lacks convincing evidence of sufficient capacity to achieve this objective. A single LEA Outreach Director and Change Management and Communications Coordinator will face an uphill battle to meet the demands in this regard for 134 LEAs. This will be particularly challenging given the other responsibilities anticipated for these individuals in other areas of the State reform agenda. With regard to the criterion concerning the objective of increasing the acquisition, adoption and use of local instructional improvement systems, the application does not address whether SchoolView is a mandatory system for LEAs or, if not, how exactly the State will allow for local decisions consistent with a process to integrate those local systems into SchoolView. The plan repeatedly emphasizes the requirement in Colorado for strong local control. This widespread control will influence the choice and implementation of a variety of local data systems that may or may not be compatible with SchoolView. The plan places a high emphasis on the State-level system but insufficiently addresses its strategy to drive data collection from the LEAs into the state platform.

Total	47	33	34	
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	15	15	

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The application presents evidence of numerous alternative routes and that the State has continued to expand eligibility of new programs. Further, the State does allow for routes that are independent of

institutions of higher education. (ii) The number of available and varied alternative programs for teachers and principals is robust. The application offers evidence of some use of these programs among teachers, however, relative to the overall number of licensed teachers in the State, the 10% use-rate demonstrates weak use in practice. However, the use of these alternative routes among the principal population is quite weak in similar proportion. (iii) The application describes the burden of identifying shortages at the LEA level and indicates that the State evaluates this information annually. The application does not provide a detailed explanation of the process the State utilizes to act upon identified shortages as they arise across the school year.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

	58	47	47
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	13	13
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	22	22

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The criterion are completely fulfilled through the narrative's description of the Colorado Growth Model measurement of student growth. Annual targets are clearly stated and the system is linked to the elements described in this section for a comprehensive plan that will ensure high quality teachers and principals. (ii) The application makes a strong case for how Colorado will implement a collaboratively built system to measure teacher and principal effectiveness as measured specifically against the criterion. The plan suggests reasonable rigor, the process of evaluations is sufficiently designed to be transparent, the elements are in place to suggest that every reasonable step has been taken to ensure a high degree of fairness. The system does fully envision multiple rating categories with evidence of significant emphasis being placed on student growth that will account for 50% of the total evaluation. The state's plan for engaging teachers and principals throughout the process is clear. The tiered system for LEA implementation of the new evaluation systems creates a solid foundation for securing effective, widespread deployment across the State with peer support among LEAs. This is a particularly impressive tactic within the State's vision for education reform. The State's commitment of placing responsibility at the highest levels through the creation of the Governor's Council for Educator Effectiveness is commendable. The responsibility is clear and the timeline objectives are reasonable yet aggressive with plans for ongoing sustainability beyond any funds available from this competition. A cautionary note again regarding the burdens being placed on the LEA Outreach Director as the narrative indicates expanded responsibility in this area for the Outreach Director in addition to those tasks already assigned in other sections. (iii) The application essentially restates the criterion and offers generally sufficient evidence of a commitment for annual evaluations. What is less clear is the state's vision for a proactive means to provide the data to teachers and principals in a timeframe that allows the data story to inform and improve instruction. (iv) a. The criterion require evidence of how evaluations will be used to provide relevant coaching and induction support. The application is silent on these elements. The application emphasizes the distribution of the evaluation results and mentions technical assistance from the CDE for LEAs but does not describe what system will be created at the LEA level to use the evaluations on an annual basis for authentic improvement. Evaluations of principals and teachers on their own will not change the path toward student growth. How the evaluations are used by the State and the LEAs in collaboration with teachers and principals to accomplish professional development is most important. The narrative fails to fully elaborate the State's vision for the use of Educator Impact Reports, what those might look like and when they would be available to teachers and principals. b. The application provides detailed evidence of the State's commitment to use evaluations to compensate, promote, and retain teachers and principals. The application specifically indicates that educator effectiveness as assessed through evaluation systems will be used as a significant factor. Federal funds from Title I and Title IIA have been allocated to support the development of these systems. c. The State offers a high-quality plan to strengthen its use of evaluations as part of rigorous, transparent, streamlined and fair procedures to determine when tenure and/or full certification is to

be granted. d. The process to determine a final protocol for removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals is clear in the application. However, a critical element that is not precise is the meaning of "ample time." The evidence of reasonable yet specific deadlines around which a teacher or principal may improve is important.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

25 23 23

(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools

15 15 15

(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas

10 8 8

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The application excels in its robust plans for ensuring the equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals. The state is thoughtful and thorough in its plan and specific goals to accomplish this objective. The plan is comprehensive in its approach to fully utilize data to accurately identify gaps in effective teachers in its high poverty/high minority schools and has provided incentives on multiple levels to address the problem. Specifically, the development of an Educator Effectiveness Index is a very innovative approach to identify where gaps exist in effective teachers especially relative to schools with high needs. (ii) The narrative briefly indicates the State's intention to leverage targeted incentives to both expand the subjects in which effective experienced teachers are prepared to teach and programs that produce effective teachers. While the application presents a chart describing the implementation of its strategy, evidence of how the State intends to monitor and refine these programs is absent.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

14 12 12

(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The application is significantly strengthened by the law already in place to annually publish the data of in-state teaching programs linked to student growth by each program graduate. Further, the State's plans for enhancing the law through Return on Investment metrics is innovative and visionary. (ii) The State's existing track record of linking funding grants to the expansion of existing teacher and principal preparation programs is compelling as a model to achieve similar success in developing programs.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals

20 16 16

(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The application provides evidence for data-informed professional development, the innovative approach of using educators as content developers, models and mentors to impact coaching and induction, and a comprehensive plan for aligning systems and removing barriers to effective implementation. The plan asserts a commitment to embed common planning and collaboration time for teachers and principals but falls short in giving persuasive evidence for how the plan will monitor and support the implementation of this element. The plan is strong in integrating aspects of the overall reform agenda in this area, specifically the sustained reliance on SchoolView as a portal for accessing data, professional development programs, further emphasis for effective use of data-driven instruction, and a priority placed upon support for teachers and principals in high-need schools and hard-to-staff subject areas. The mechanism for receiving and benefitting from feedback that would allow improvements and positive evolution of foundational components like SchoolView is not provided. (ii) The three strategies articulated as evidence of a strong plan to comply with this criterion are innovative and well-integrated. In the aggregate, the three strategies present a compelling case for how the State will replicate and develop its most effective support tools for teachers and principals while removing those that are not meeting expectations. The plan is also strengthened by the

creative development of the Colorado Educator Growth Model as a set of metric to evaluate how well LEAs and individual schools improve educator effectiveness.

Total	138	113	113
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State's statutory authority provides for direct intervention in both schools and LEAs.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	31	37	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	26	32	

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The State has provided strong evidence that it has taken the tough action necessary to address the issues in low-performing schools consistent with the four turnaround strategies required in this competition. Further, the State's plan for ultimately identifying all of its persistently low-performing schools is thoughtful and demonstrates a commitment to take aggressive action. The narrative provides a detailed explanation of what factors will be included in determining a persistently low-achieving school. (ii) The application presents an array of approaches that benefit from the experience of past mistakes. The creation of the Colorado Turnaround Center as an integrated element of the State's overall reform agenda demonstrates a thoughtful strategy to attack this critical problem. The narrative and supporting appendices provide compelling evidence of a broad effort to support LEAs in their efforts to successfully turnaround low-achieving schools. The narrative offers an expansive description of the elements within this strategy. The dual threads provided by the Colorado Turnaround Center and the CDE Turnaround Office run the risk of overlap in several ways that might not be the most efficient use of resources. The stated advantage of this approach is understood in theory but the question remains in terms of how well it will work in practice. The State is aggressive linking resources to turnaround schools through incentivizing schools with large grants of \$1 million in exchange for dramatic change. The aspirational commitment to turning around low-achieving schools is clear in the narrative and supporting material but the State's prior track record is, in its own words, sporadic. The application lacks a thoughtful description of how it intends to monitor progress in this complex dual system to allow for modifications and adjustments during the grant period.

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The panel provided clarification that the CDE Turnaround Office is essentially a current commitment by the State to coordinate its turnaround initiatives and that the creation of the Colorado Turnaround Center is intended to be developed as part of the State's Race to the Top plan. It was clearly explained that these two Turnaround offices are not duplicative efforts. Upon development of the Colorado Turnaround Center, the CDE Turnaround Office will perform the oversight and monitoring function.

Total	50	41	47
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F. General

Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
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(F)(1) Making education funding a priority

10

5

5

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The application provides evidence that Colorado spent more in FY09 to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education than it did in FY08, however the criterion requires that the expenditures increase as a percentage of the overall State budget decreased. (ii) The State has clear policies in place to ensure equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs which are evidenced in the narrative and appendices. If the local LEA share of required funds is insufficient to fund the LEA's Total Program, then the State makes up the difference. State law also requires that LEAs allocate at least 75% of its at-risk funding to school or LEA-wide instructional programs for at-risk students or for staff development to support these students.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools

40

40

40

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Colorado's commitment to successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools is credibly demonstrated by its laws and a strong history of supporting non-traditional schools. The driving fact that, in Colorado's legal framework, literally 100% of the schools in the State could be charter schools with ample funding, consistent with traditional per pupil expenditures and accounting for additional funds provided for at-risk populations, is overwhelming; and, the statute allows for multiple avenues from which to be granted a charter. (i) Colorado's charter school law does not present any limitations with regard to increasing the number of high-performing charters and, in fact, expressly prohibits such limitations. (ii) The State has a prescriptive, comprehensive procedure for approving or renewing charter school applications. State law requires that student achievement be a factor in making the decision about renewing a charter. LEAs are responsible for monitoring its charter schools and ensuring that its charters are accountable for local and state performance expectations. Evidence is also provided where charter applications have been denied and also where charter schools have been closed. The law is clear and definitive with regard to meeting this criterion. (iii) The application provides evidence that State law ensures equitable funding for charter schools compared to traditional public schools as well as equitable shares of local, State and Federal revenues. While an LEA authorizer of a charter is entitled to withhold up to 5% of its per pupil allocation for administrative expenses, the LEA is required to fully justify each expenditure and to account for the amounts withheld. (iv) The State provides funding for charter school facilities through a variety of sources including the Charter School Capital Facilities Financing Act and the Public School Capital Assistance Fund. (v) The application describes the State's policies enacted in the Innovation Schools Act of 2008. Evidence is given to explain the State's enabling legislation for the establishment of innovative, autonomous public schools as well as specific examples of LEAs taking advantage of these laws to create innovative schools.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions

5

3

3

(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The application essentially restates the reform conditions already addressed in prior sections except for describing the Initiative underway in the CDE to examine and evaluate how the CDE is aligned with the State's reform agenda. No other significant reform conditions are provided.

Total

55

48

48

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Colorado provides evidence of a wide variety of STEM initiatives that in the aggregate demonstrate a strong, solid and measurable commitment to STEM priorities within its reform agenda.

Total	15	15	15
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Colorado has presented a compelling set of evidence of a strong, statewide reform agenda that places priority emphasis on the areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. The State and its participating LEAs are clearly engaged in a systemic approach to education reform that has been thoughtfully designed in a high-quality plan. The plan is consistent in linking its strategies and funds to a focus upon increased student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps across student subgroups and increasing the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. The application is supported by a wide array of critical stakeholders and by a significant number of LEAs indicating a complete statewide approach.

Total		0	0
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Grand Total	500	402	409
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

Colorado Application #1600CO-4



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	60	60	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	40	40	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	15	15	

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

All four areas of educational reform that make up Rtt are addressed coherently and comprehensively. A clear set of goals related to working statewide are articulated. These goals are ambitious with very high expectations in many sectors with 100% school participation projected. This may be unachievable, yet it is worthy to enunciate such goals and attempt to achieve them. The LEA commitment to the Rtt plan is impressive with 94% of districts signing on. The MOU with the districts directly commits them to participating in all aspects of the plan. A substantial number of professional associations in LEAs with collective bargaining units also signed the MOU, however, some 50% did not. There is substantial evidence provided in letters of support from a wide array of public and private partners in the state. This support is identifiable and to some degree beyond just indicating general support for the initiative. The reform timeline is aggressive and is congruent with previous reform activities in this state.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	28	30	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	20	20	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8	10	

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The proposal provides detailed aspects of the management and implementation plan that allows a clear understanding of what goals are to be achieved and how they will be achieved with clear roles for all participants. Rtt will reside in the Office of the Education Commissioner. This is a clear leadership responsibility in an office that oversees all state education programs—a distinct positive for integration of all state programs with Rtt. Other full time leadership officers are identified with an indication that compensation to these senior officers are tied to achievement of Rtt goals—this provides direct leadership incentives for Rtt success. In addition, team leaders in specific focus areas will take on leadership responsibility with the same compensation incentives. In most cases it is possible to determine budget allocations as they are tied to specific goals and objectives. Support from a broad array of stakeholders is evident in the appendix, particularly for private sector partners, other non-K/12 education sectors (higher education and early childhood). Specific "partnering" agreements were not always clear although support was positively expressed.

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

During the session, more explicit partnering arrangements were addressed, helping to more clearly describe the partnering strategy and specifics.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps

	30	13	17
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	8	12

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state has a clear record of legislative education policy reform in all areas specified for Rtt. It has addressed the establishment of high standard, student assessments and data systems development/implementation. This is an impressive policy accomplishment and sets the stage for further reform efforts. Of particular significance is the Colorado Growth Model, now a prototype for other states. The state does demonstrate enhancement in student progress on NAEP and state testing for all students and for NCLB related subgroups. However, there is little evidence of achievement gap reduction with regard to these subgroups. In particular, the graduation rates for Black, Hispanics and American Indians have been steady with some signs of deteriorations. A demographic shift "suggestion" is offered for this result, but no analysis of this possibility is presented. It is implied that new students coming to the state were responsible for growing achievement gaps yet this "hypothesis" could explain the progress made on achievement overall.

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

During the session, information regarding achievement gap reduction was provided that clarified, particularly for ELL students, past policy issues that may have resulted in achievement gap increases. The Rtt plan will address those issues.

Total	125	101	107
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20	20	

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state has developed and is further developing standards of high and international quality with an aggressive plan to implement those standards if they are not already implemented.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments

10	10	10
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state is involved in the robust consortium of states to develop "core" assessments.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments

20	20	20
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

A well articulated plan and timetable is presented which moves the state to meet specific goals in transitioning to the new standards. It is evident that with the supports provided in this plan that the state can meet this timetable of development and implementation.

Total	70	70	70
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18	18	

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state now has a data system that includes 9 of the 12 elements of the COMPETES Act. These 9 reform prerequisites are well articulated and aligned with the specific elements of the Act.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	4	5	
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state has developed a comprehensive system to access data identified as the "School View System" that includes the data from the Colorado Growth Model and allows access of data broadly to parents, teachers, principals and the general public. This is a well designed effort to make available education data in the state to all, at least electronically. It is not clear how this data can be accessed by those populations that may not be able or comfortable accessing electronic information or may need access in a different language.

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

Clarification was provided at the session indicating that the "School View System" will be translated into at least seven languages and hard copies will be made available to parents that may not wish to access data digitally.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	18	18	
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(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

A specific plan is described that will provide comprehensive educator access to the data. In addition, there will be specific and designated efforts in the RtI office to provide support for training on data access and use by educators. By sequentially delivering this support to LEAs, the success of the support is more plausible. It is important to note the LEAs have agreed to participate in Regional Centers where support can be tailored to specific needs. Access to the data by a newly formed Colorado Educator's Research Consortium will enhance data access to researchers and evaluators.

Total	47	40	41
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	11	11	

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

There is a substantive set of alternative pathways for teachers and leaders with 42 entities authorized to provide these pathways by state laws. With less than 10% of new teachers and leaders produced through

these pathways, these alternatives are not leading to production of many of the states educators. With regard to the assessment of teacher shortages/needs, "emergency authorization" requests, a passive versus aggressive measure, is the primary data sources for measuring shortages/needs. No active assessment of shortages is available or planned, leaving only a passive approach available to fill potentially significant shortages.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	44	44
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10	10
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	19	19

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The plan for improving teacher and principal effectiveness is well articulated, highly ambitious, with a timetable that identifies the overall implementation schedule. Although ambitious, if all the pieces fall into place, it is achievable with positive, solid impacts to the states education reform efforts. Evaluation of educators is anchored by a robust and accessible student data system that provides data on student growth. By 2012-2013, a new Governor's Council for Educator Effectiveness will implement the annual educator evaluation system. The evaluation will require 50% or more of the evaluation related to student achievement—a definite plus in success of the Rtt activities overall. The system will include other elements of evaluation which were not specifically addressed. The state makes clear in its plan the positive aspect of providing initial and ongoing technical support for the implementation of the yearly evaluations. The evaluations will be utilized to support individual educator development, requiring a professional development plan for all educators. The state makes it clear that these plans will be utilized for various purposes but details are not available with regard to the scope for which the evaluations will be utilized for compensation, promotion, retention, granting tenure, full certification or removal.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	20	20
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	12	12
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	8	8

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

To ensure equitable distribution of effective educators, the state will by 2011 develop and publish an Education Effectiveness Index. This public articulation can be helpful in indentifying, statewide, the significant areas for distribution of effective educators. The state will provide compensatory incentives for principals and teachers—the incentives for principals were detailed in the proposal but the details related to teacher incentives were not. The state plan includes support for Teach for America to augment its placement of effective teachers in low achieving school, but, it remains unclear how this will enhance effectiveness. Inclusion of National Board Certification opportunity for teachers is an indicator of effectiveness for the Rtt efforts. There will be in place some incentives and special targeted grant programs to LEAs and schools to grow effective educators. Overall, this plan has important components included but lacks specificity.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	12	12
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

It is a great advantage for the state to already have policy and data capabilities to link and report on the effectiveness of educator preparation programs and student achievement. The state RtT plan calls for the development of metrics (by 2013) related to "return on investment" in the state's existent educator preparation program. This will give the state a new and potentially useful understanding of preparation effectiveness. Using the Index, differential resource allocations can be made to those programs demonstrating effectiveness. There is no indication in the plan related to assisting programs that may be identified as "ineffective."

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals

20

17

17

(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state will utilize the public School View system and the Effectiveness Index to identifying needed areas of educator support and enlist entities such as the School Leadership Academy, Content Collaborative, and Regional Learning Communities along with LEA efforts to provide support to educators. This is a rich and important support system for educators. An already developed and implemented work place survey to state educators will be further utilized to evaluate and provide qualitative data regarding the impact of the professional support system. The state will track individual participation in the support efforts and will identify effective educators that can assist in the delivery of support. It remains unclear how all this elements of evaluation will be directly linked for purposes of continuous improvement.

Total

138

104

104

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	8	8	

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state has a new law related to the state role in turning around low performing schools. The law focuses on providing reliable data regarding performance and support to the underperforming schools. A timeline of 5-years before actual steps taken by the state to control the school seems too extended.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	35	35	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	30	30	

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

With the Colorado Growth Model, underperforming schools can be readily identified. The state plans to implement four turn around models by 2015 that will be developed and implemented in a new state entity called the Turnaround Center. A well developed timeline, highly ambitious but very specific, is provided in the plan for turnaround activity. If accomplished, this turnaround agenda would be impressive even if it takes a substantial period of time.

Total

50

43

43

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Percent of state revenues for education in 2009 was lower than those for 2008. State allocation of funds to support education take into account higher resource needs for poverty, ELL and related student indicators of educational risk.				
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)				
During the session, budget specific information was addressed that indicated that the proportion of the state budget dedicated to education was less in 2009 than 2008.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	40	40	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
There are no limits placed on the number of charter schools in the state--153 charters presently exist. State laws exist articulating clearly the development, implementation and evaluation of charter schools and funding for charters is the same as for non-charters. There are various state and state-partnerships available to charters for facilities and related infrastructure development. The state has a policy mechanism available for LEAs to develop and implement "innovative and alternative" schools within the jurisdiction of the LEA.				
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The state has taken both legislative and executive reform actions leading to policies and practices related to education reform, including a robust, accessible student data system, accountability processes, charter school development and initial efforts to link educator effectiveness to student outcomes. The platform for education reform is quite extensive and bodes well for the success of the proposed Rtt augmentation.				
Total	55	55	50	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	16	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The state makes a very clear effort to prioritize STEM efforts in all its proposed activities including addressing high standards, new assessments, and augmented professional development and augmenting sources for STEM educator preparation. By doing so in all participating LEAs, it will address opportunities for underrepresented groups in STEM opportunities.				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

Yes Yes

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Overall, this proposal meets all the requirements for this Absolute Priority. It addresses each required component in a comprehensive manner, has a solid history and policy platform for educational reform and presents an ambitious yet achievable plan and timetable. It engages LEAs in a substantial manner and has a clear set of achievements related to enhanced student performance that is statewide.

Total

0

0

Grand Total

500

428

430



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

Colorado Application #1600CO-5



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	55	45	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	38	28	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12	12	

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. CO proposes to meet the RTTT goals in the four pillar areas through four strategies: (1) access to public school choice for all students; (2) developing educator capacity; (3) providing incentives for effectiveness; and (4) creating opportunities for innovation. The plan delineates specific and measurable RTTT performance goals. The state appropriately takes into account its predominantly local control governance of education, as it proposes an approach to foster educator and stakeholder collaboration with incentives. The plan, as described, also builds coherently upon previous state reforms consistent with RTTT. This section fully meets this criterion. ii. The participating LEAs (134) represent 74% of the state's total LEAs (180), 90% of the state's 1744 schools, 94% of public school students, and 94% of students in poverty. The state used the RTTT model MOU in its entirety for participation commitments by LEAs, and 100% of the participating districts agreed to all requirements of the MOU. This represents a significant accomplishment on the part of the state, given its local control culture. Not all CO districts have collective bargaining units with teachers' unions. Of those participating districts that do have such agreements (88), 41% (36) were signed by the teachers' union leader. All participating district MOUs (100%) were signed by the Superintendent and board chairs. While the overall participation rate is exemplary, without union support, 52 of the participating districts may encounter resistance in implementing elements of the MOU, particularly those involving teacher evaluation linked to student achievement. iii. Because of the high percentage of participating LEAs, schools, students, and students in poverty, and because of the unanimous acceptance of all MOU requirements by superintendents and board chairs, the plan has high potential for broad statewide impact, except as noted in (A)(1)(ii), regarding those districts whose teachers' union leaders did not sign the MOU.

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

Based on the proposal, an assumption was made that participating LEAs would implement all requirements of the MOU. However, during the presentation, it became clear that the documented LEA commitment to 100% implementation was conditional based on the final proposal submission, and actual commitment is yet to be determined. Recourse for LEAs that decide not to meet all RTTT requirements, after seeing the final state proposal, is not clear.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	21	22	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	14	15	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7	7	

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. The proposal describes in detail specific leadership roles, dedicated teams for each of the RTTT components, and a strong organizational plan for project management. An innovative element of the CO plan is to tie 25% of RTTT leadership salaries to performance against the stated annual targets. The proposal clearly describes processes for budget management, performance tracking, and general project administration. While the proposal offers a reasonable plan for how LEAs will be supported and held accountable, weaknesses of the plan include the fact that "change agents" who will facilitate LEAs participation have not yet been identified, and no mention is made of a regional support system (e.g., did not see a role for the BOCES). All activities appear to be directly managed by the SEA, which may not be efficient, effective, or even feasible. The high cost of consultants to "jumpstart" the project in the first four months of Year 1 is questionable, and raises the question of whether the SEA will have the capacity to pick up the work after the 4-month consultancy. The proposal details several reasonable strategies for sustainability, including the development of several permanent not-for-profit organizations, a private fund-raising effort, and involvement of key policymakers in determining the repurposing of state funds to support continuation of RTTT efforts beyond the grant period. ii. Stakeholder support and commitment is described in the proposal, and includes the statewide teachers' union, the state business coalition, the CO school board and administrators' associations, the charter school community, IHEs, STEM organizations, legislators, and others. However, the letters of support did not detail specific contributions and commitments to be made by the supportive parties.

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The presentation clarified the role and need for consultants to work with LEAs in the first year. The identification and roles of "change agents" were still not adequately explained.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps

	30	13	13
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	8	8

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. The proposal provides sufficient evidence that the SFSF funding received in the state was used in part to implement reforms consistent with the RTTT pillars, including an educator identifier system, dropout prevention, enhancement of the state's student growth model data system, concurrent high school/college enrollment, principal leadership, and expanding the state student identifier system to preschool. State laws are referenced supporting all four of the RTTT reform areas. This section narrative meets requirements for this criterion. ii. Student achievement in mathematics has increased on both NAEP and the state tests in 4th and 8th grades. Minority subgroups made the largest gains in mathematics, thereby demonstrating a decrease in achievement gaps for these groups in this subject. Evidence for reading does not show the same gains or achievement gap reductions. The exception is English Language Learners and Hispanic subgroups, whose reading scores on state assessments improved significantly from 2003-2009. CO has recently changed its graduation rate calculation, so does not have trend data for this period. The narrative does not adequately explain the connections between the data and the actions that may have contributed to the cited improvements. For example, the rise in mathematics scores is attributed to "a focus on" standards and alignment, but no explanation is provided regarding which actions or initiatives created that focus, and who made the actual changes that produced the cited results. By the same token, since reading performance did not improve, this implies that perhaps there was no parallel "focus" on reading standards and alignment as there was for mathematics, and the reasons for this lack of focus would need to be explained.

Total

125

89

80

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20	20	

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. CO is participating in the CCSSO/NGA Common Core state standards initiative. These standards will be internationally benchmarked and will build toward high school graduation and career readiness. The consortium consists of 48 states, the District of Columbia, and two territories, a significant number of participants. (20) ii. The proposal indicates a commitment to adopt the standards before August 2, 2010, through a simple process of state board adoption. (20)

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	6	6	
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

CO is participating in the SMARTER assessment consortium, which will develop a high-quality, summative, on-line, and adaptive assessment system aligned to the Common Core Standards. The SMARTER consortium consists of 12 members, representing less than half the states in the country, resulting in medium points awarded for this criterion.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	10	10	
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The CO transition to enhanced standards plan focuses on three goals: building educator capacity, high-quality aligned instructional materials/assessments, and compliance evaluation. It is not clear from the plan how "change agents" and others will be recruited and engaged to lead districts in the transition. While the overall proposal stresses flexibility and innovation in approaches to improvement, it seems that with a rollout of new standards, especially on the heels of a fairly recent state standards revision, a specific rollout plan will be needed. The plan as described shows a heavy reliance on mostly self-guided "content collaboratives" and "regional learning communities," but it is not clear what processes these groups will engage in or how implementation progress will be documented. A logic model showing how the planned activities will lead to the intended goals/outcomes would have been useful.

Total	70	56	56	
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18	18	

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

CO meets 9 of the 12 America COMPETES Act elements for a comprehensive longitudinal data system. The unmet elements are # 4 (communication of data systems across K-12 and higher education), # 8 (teacher identifier system), and # 11 (successful transitions to post-secondary education). (18)

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The proposal indicates that the main form of data access will be through the SchoolView portal, which allows access to data on student progress measured through summative assessments. Educators will have access to student-level data. The system houses the Colorado Growth Model data. Enhancements under RTTT will include the addition of an "instructional improvement system," school readiness and post-secondary readiness data, educator effectiveness data, and ROI analytics for leaders and policymakers. This description meets the requirements for this criterion.

(C)(3) Using data to Improve Instruction	18	12	12
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(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The SchoolView platform will house instructional resources aligned with standards. Educators can use the data to find areas needing improvement, then access these resources as appropriate. The system will generate student-specific warnings for students with attendance and performance deficits. The main strategy for getting educators comfortable with the use of data is through the learning communities and collaboratives established for the standards transition. This seems to rely heavily on grassroots motivation and the as-yet unidentified "change agents." This section of the proposal lists the types of instructional resources that are anticipated to be available, but does not explain how educators will analyze the data and make the link to the necessary resources.

Total	47	35	35
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	12	12	

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. CO law allows alternative paths to teacher and principal certification, authorizing such programs to be offered by school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), independent schools, charter schools, institutions of higher education (IHEs), not-for-profit organizations, or any combination of these. These programs are reviewed and approved by the SEA and undergo periodic site-based reauthorization. Selectivity varies from program to program, and therefore cannot be considered uniformly high. Whether the certification offered through these programs is the same as for traditional programs was not explained. School-based experiences and mentoring were not discussed. ii. Currently, 42 agencies are approved to offer alternative teacher preparation programs, and 9 are approved to offer alternative principal preparation programs. From the participation data provided, many of these programs are not active continuously, so it is not clear how the program is activated at a given site, and raises a question regarding the quality of a "dormant" program versus an active one. In general, while it appears that there is broad opportunity for alternative certification options, the quality and content of these programs is not well-explained. iii. The state does not conduct an annual supply-and-demand survey, but tracks shortages through requests for emergency licensure. The proposal did not describe how these data are or are not linked to recruitment and preparation.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	34	36
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3	3
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	11	11

(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	6	8	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	14	14	

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. The proposal references using the Colorado Growth Model to provide student growth data for tested subjects and grades. No reference is made to using alternate measures of learning for non-tested subjects and grades. ii. The proposal describes how participating LEAs, with teacher and principal involvement, will individually design evaluation systems with multiple rating categories and with student performance as at least 50% of the evaluation rating. The Governor's Council for Educational Effectiveness, established specifically for this component of RTTT, will monitor this work and develop criteria for high-quality evaluation systems. Participating LEAs will form councils to implement the new systems using a portion of their RTTT funds, with technical assistance from the SEA. An outreach director at the SEA will coordinate this work. It is not clear from the proposal whether this approach has a reasonable expectation of establishing credible, high-quality evaluation in all participating LEAs. No mention is made of how this plan will be affected in those districts whose union leaders did not sign the RTTT MOU, where resistance to the teacher evaluation requirement may be anticipated. iii. Conducting the annual evaluations is projected to occur in 2012-2013. Educator Impact Reports will be created in the SchoolView portal. However, the proposal does not address how student growth will be measured in those grades and subjects that are not tested by the state; therefore, it is unclear how this system will be put in place for ALL educators in participating LEAs. iv. The proposal states that the evaluation system will be used to inform decisions in all four required areas (teacher development, compensation/promotion/retention, tenure/full certification or probationary status, and dismissal). However, this plan relies on future recommendations, not yet specified, being made to the Governor and legislature regarding modifications to current state law. Therefore, it is not clear how LEAs will use the data to make these decisions. No mention is made of how this plan will be affected in those districts whose union leaders did not sign the RTTT MOU, where resistance to the teacher evaluation requirement may be anticipated.

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The presentation clarified that the 13 content collaboratives will generate interim and formative assessments in non-tested subjects. However, it was still not clear whether these assessments will be utilized across all grade levels, leaving the possibility that non-tested grades (such as Kindergarten and 1st grade) may be subject to gaps in student growth data.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	5	5	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	5	5	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	0	0	

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. The state will employ three strategies to improve equity in the distribution of effective educators: incentives and support for recruitment and retention, increasing the effectiveness of current educators, and dismissing ineffective educators. The SEA will create an "Educator Effectiveness Index" to measure the concentration of effective teachers and principals in schools. It is not clear what measures and methods will be employed to determine effectiveness. ii. Increasing the number and percentage of effective teachers in hard-to-staff and specialty areas is not addressed, resulting in no credit for this criterion.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	8	10	
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. The proposal does not explain whether retention data be retroactive to include earlier graduates (since retention data implies multiple years of teaching employment). Also, no mention is made regarding teachers of subjects/grades that are not tested by the state. Unless this question is answered, it would appear that many teachers, including recent preparation program graduates, will be left out of the student growth evaluation model. This is an underlying weakness throughout Section D of this proposal. ii. CO proposes to invest in Teach for America as a successful program, although it does not have CO-specific data about program graduate effectiveness. The proposal states that CO will provide grants to effective preparation programs to disseminate their successful practices, particularly in the areas of high poverty schools and IHE/LEA partnerships. Again, until the student growth model can include teachers of all subjects and grades, it is not possible to know how the state will define "effective preparation programs."

(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The presentation clarified that the 13 content collaboratives will generate alternative assessments for non-tested subjects, but not necessarily non-tested grades.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals

20

8

8

(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. The state proposes four strategies to support educators: Offering professional development through SchoolView, facilitating peer-to-peer assistance, developing instructional leaders in struggling schools, and customized PD resources. The proposal does not indicate who will deliver and monitor these supports, or how their effectiveness will be measured. Key sources of data to inform professional development and support are the Educator Impact Reports that will be available on SchoolView, the annual educator evaluations that will include individual professional development plans, and identifying evidence-based professional development offerings for educators. The proposal does not describe whether the evidence-based PD will actually be offered within the RTTT effort. Educators in turnaround schools and hard-to-staff subjects will receive specialized PD and support from the SEA. ii. The plan relies on the LEAs to track the effectiveness of PD offerings through monitoring their own local data systems. The SEA will conduct a school conditions survey annually to see if conditions supporting educators improve. There is no specific plan for state monitoring of program effects.

Total

138

67

71

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs

Available

Tier 1

Tier 2

Init

10

10

10

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

As of 2009, CO has the authority to intervene directly in the lowest-achieving LEAs and schools. This fully meets requirements for this criterion.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools

40

35

35

(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools

5

5

5

(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools

35

30

30

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. CO uses its Growth Model to identify the persistently lowest-achieving schools. The proposal indicates that there are 87 such schools within the participating LEAs. The identification method includes high schools

that would be Title I eligible. This meets the requirements for this criterion. ii. About half of the identified schools (40) would implement one of the four RTTT intervention strategies; the other group (47) would get "turnaround support" incentive grants. The second group is described as adopting a turnaround model after the grant period is over. Partial credit is awarded for this criterion.

Total	50	45	45
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	6	6	

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. State expenditures for education decreased from FY2008-2009, from 45% to 43% of total state expenditures. ii. CO appears to have a relatively equitable school funding system compared to other states, as determined by external rating agencies.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	40	40	
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. The proposal provides evidence that the state has NO CAPS on charter school establishment or enrollment. Currently, 153 charter schools operate in CO. ii. The proposal provides evidence that the state has laws and rules regarding how charters get approved and how they are held accountable (by the LEA); to be reauthorized, charters must present performance information. Contracts can be revoked for violations of the contract or state law, failure to make reasonable progress towards student performance goals, or for fiscal mismanagement. iii. Charter schools in CO receive 100% of LEA per-pupil funding. This fully meets requirements for this criterion. iv. CO makes a state appropriation available for charter school facilities. The state also created a charter school debt reserve fund to provide additional security for capital financing. This fully meets requirements for this criterion. v. CO allows waivers for school innovation, and the proposal addresses the development of autonomous public schools as requested in the application.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3	3	
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Other significant reforms are listed in the application and woven throughout. These include a P-20 alignment strategy, the Educator Identifier Act, the Innovation Schools Act, and the Colorado Growth Model. The listed state reforms support the RTTT reforms. However, no evidence was provided for outcomes of these reforms.

Total	55	49	49	
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0	0	

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The proposed plan does not meet the three requirements of the STEM priority. It focuses mainly on making more resources available to teachers (requirement ii), but does not mention developing rigorous courses of study for students or the recruitment and preparation more students for advanced study and careers in

STEM fields. The CO STEM Network and STEM in Action Initiative, as described, do not fully meet the three requirements of the competitive preference priority.

Total	15	0	0
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The plan, with reservations as described below, does represent a comprehensive approach to education reform as required for the Absolute Priority. For each of the RTTT reforms, weaknesses appear in the proposal: 1) In 52 of the participating districts, union leaders did not sign the MOU, raising questions about commitment to teacher reforms including evaluation based on student growth measures. 2) The proposal does not address how student growth will be measured in grades and subjects not tested by the state. Addressing these additional growth measures is essential to ensuring that all educators will be included in the reform's evaluation system. 3) The project management plan relies heavily on consultants and unnamed "change agents," raising questions about the state's capacity to implement the RTTT reforms and sustain them beyond the grant period. 4) The plan is heavily reliant on the SEA for direct services to participating districts, without the use of regional or other local supports, which raises capacity questions in addition to those mentioned in point #3 above. 5) The plan also relies heavily on the good will of participating districts to self-direct their reform efforts, without making clear the processes they will engage in to do so. 6) A clearly-described system to measure progress and document the effectiveness of reform efforts is lacking.

Total		0	0
Grand Total	500	341	336